

different types of businesses operated in the city by 1895.

Furthermore, black businesses grew in competition with white businesses, with several black entrepreneurs opening businesses in fields such as medicine and legal practice, professions typically dominated by whites. Some workers, particularly in education and the ministry, saw no competition from whites.⁴⁵ Because of high morale and success within the black community, Wilmington became a destination for African Americans wishing to benefit from the city's growth potential. White employers in rural sections of the state lamented the loss, complaining that the only black laborers left to hire were "rough farm laborers" because the "well trained" workers had moved to the cities.⁴⁶ Beyond being a place for those in the lower classes to move up within the black community, Wilmington offered upper-class blacks a chance to collectively further their economic and social standing.⁴⁷ Congressman George White opened an office in the city as did new attorneys such as William E.

numbers of black businesses surpassed that of other cities and approached the leader, New Bern, by 1889. By 1893, Wilmington boasted twenty-four black owned businesses whereas New Bern's total black businesses had dropped to nine. Logan, *Negro in North Carolina*, 112; *Reference Book of the Mercantile Association of the Carolinas*, 1893, 76-80, 214-225, 317-321.

⁴⁵ Logan, in his study of African American businesses, indicated that the "ruling element" of black society was drawn from the clergy, educators, government officials, and doctors. Logan discovered that, of the 2,036 blacks working as professionals in the state in 1890, over 95 percent of those workers were either clergy or teachers, two of the employment fields left open to African Americans to serve others of their race without competition from whites unlike doctors and attorneys who had to compete with whites for clients. Logan, *Negro in North Carolina*, 105; Kenzer, *Enterprising Southerners*, 65.

⁴⁶ Logan, *Negro in North Carolina*, 88.

⁴⁷ Logan, *Negro in North Carolina*, 86.

Henderson, who relocated to the city from Salisbury.⁴⁸

Although Wilmington's African American workers employed in unskilled labor positions represented a majority of the total workforce, a growing percentage of the African American male working population was employed in white collar positions, at both upper and managerial levels.⁴⁹ As in most of North Carolina's urban centers in the last decades of the nineteenth century, African American professionals in Wilmington averaged less than 5 percent of the black workforce. Some of the businessmen, such as baker Lorenzo Kennedy, worked for themselves. Although Kennedy's establishment was worth less than \$500 in 1893, he was a respected businessman, proven by his high credit rating.

The wealthiest black-owned businesses in 1893 were those of builder John G. Norwood and undertaker Thomas Rivera followed by carriage maker James A.

⁴⁸ Labor organizations were still in operation in the city during the early years of the decade. However, by 1894, the Knights of Labor reported that the statewide organization was defunct. Higuchi, "White Supremacy," 106; Logan, *Negro in North Carolina*, 104. For profiles of many Wilmington black businessmen, see Appendix A.

⁴⁹ Statewide, African American skilled laborers represented almost 10 percent of the state's skilled workforce in trades, transportation, manufacturing and mechanical industries in 1890. In 1897 Wilmington, skilled, semi-skilled and transportation industry black laborers represented 32 percent of the total workforce. A large percentage of Wilmington's workers, 34 percent, were employed in services and were most often employed in jobs such as barbers, firefighters, janitors, laborers, laundresses, nurses, restaurant and saloon keepers, policemen and domestic servants in 1897, down from 57.3 percent in 1889. Therefore, Wilmington's black working population was moving from service oriented jobs towards other types of employment. Some statistics generated from Cody in "After the Storm," 100; 1897 *Wilmington City Directory*; Higuchi, "White Supremacy," 144-146; Logan, *Negro in North Carolina*, 87.